DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 133 858 EA 009 112

AUTHOR	Bennett, N.; Vorapipatana, K.
TITLE	Towards Community-Centered Education for National Harmony and Development in Thailand. IIEP Seminar Paper: 13.
INSTITUTION	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Paris (France). International Inst. for Educational Planning.
PUB DATE	75
NOTE	32p.; A contribution to the IIEP Seminar on "The Planning of Learning Arrangements of all Kinds for Local Communities" (December 9-17, 1974)
AVAILABLE FROM	IIEP Publications, 7-9 rue Eugene-Delacroix, 75016 Paris, France (3.00 francs)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adult Basic Education; Citizen Participation; *Continuous Learning; Educational Innovation; Elementary Education; Evening Classes; *Literacy Education; *Nonformal Education; Regional Programs; *Rural Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Thailand

ABSTRACT

Though various adult and nonformal adult education programs have existed in Thailand over the last half-century, up to quite recently most of these remained second-class copies of the full-time formal school system. The new adult education programs concentrate on creating situations and raising issues relevant to the villagers' environment. The programs encourage villagers to discuss their problems among themselves and to examine various possible alternative solutions. Through sharing their own experiences in class and in other semiformal activities, the villagers find solutions to their problems and gradually master the process of "Khit Phen." Descriptions are given of three programs that are currently in operation--the functional literacy program, newspaper reading centers, and the school equivalency adult education curricula--and of three programs in the planning stage--a skill training system to meet the needs of villagers, lifelong education centers, and regional adult education centers. (Author/IRT)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED133858

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL BY MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

UNESCO

TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

IIEP seminar paper: (13)

TOWARDS COMMUNITY-CENTRED EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL HARMONY AND DEVELOPMENT IN THAILAND

N. Bennett and K. Vorapipatana

A contribution to the IIEP Seminar on "The planning of learning arrangements of all kinds for local communities"
9 - 17 December 1974

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING
(established by Unesco)
7-9, rue Eugène-Delacroix, 75016 Paris

© Unesco 1975

EA 009 112

The opinions expressed in these papers are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Institute or of Unesco.

CONTENTS

		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	PHILOSOPHY OF ADULT EDUCATION	5
III.	THREE NEW COMMUNITY-CENTERED PROGRAMMES	8
A.	Functional Literacy Programme - Background	8
	The Scheme	8
	Administration and Financing	12
B.	Newspaper Reading Centres - Background	14
	The Project	14
	Administration and Financing	15
C.	Functionalising School Equivalency Adult Education Curricula	
	Background - Background	16
	The Process	17
IV.	SOME FURTHER PLANS	19
A.	Developing a skill training system to meet the skill needs of	
	villagers - Background	19
	The Plan	19
B.	Establishment of Lifelong Education Centres - Background	21
	The Plan	21
C.	Establishment of Regional Adult Education Centre - Background	23
	The Plan	23
	CONCLUSIONS	25

Note: The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of either UNESCO or the Government of Thailand. Dr. Kowit Vorapipata (Director of the Adult Education Division, Ministry of Education) co-operated extensively in the preparation of this paper, through providing the necessary factual information, and discussing the contents. Without his assistance the paper could not have been written though the author accepts sole responsibility for the conclusions.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Given the comparative social and cultural homogeneity of Thailand at first sight the need for adapting learning arrangements to meet local requirements might seem considerably less pressing than in many other countries. Over 90 per cent of the population are of Thai origin and are Buddhist, over 80 per cent live in rural areas and grow rice as the staple crop, and the majority of the people in the various parts of the country have a similar cultural heritage.

2. Unfortunately however, in common with all other developing countries Thailand does show a dichotomy as between the modern sector (mainly urban) and the traditional sector. People in the towns generally try to emulate a modern western life style, whilst at the same time those in the more remote rural areas follow a traditional life pattern which has not changed significantly over the last century. Even more unfortunately the existing educational system is designed far more to meet the needs of the modern urban sector (less than 20 per cent of the population) those those of the more traditional rural sector.

3. However, even if the educational system were redirected towards the needs of the mass of the population, as long as this system remained national in design it is our contention that it would still bypass many of the essential learning needs of the mass of the population, for it is inevitable that in a country the size of Thailand (1,500 km. from North to South, and with a population of over 38 million), despite any apparent homogeneity, there will inevitably be many significant and crucial regional and local differences.

4. For example, the country straddles several agricultural zones with rubber being grown in the South, tobacco in the North, and a large fishing industry along the whole of extensive coastline. (Thailand has the fifth largest fishing industry in the world) etc., Land ownership patterns differ widely in different parts of the country as does the fertility of the soil, the climate, and the prosperity of the people. The average household cash income in the Norteast of the country for example is falling and is less than one quarter of that in the central region, (which is rising). Even linguistically various dialects of Thai are commonly used by the majority of the population, and almost 10 per cent speak either Cambodian or Malay.

5. Since many leading Thai educators draw their inspiration from Buddhist philosophy and see the function of education not so much as a part of the reward system of society, but as a way of helping people understand and live in harmony with their environment, one of the central premises of all educational reform proposals of the last few years has been to give effect to that philosophy as regards education through the regionalisation and localisation of both the curriculum and the administration of education.

6. Thailand with an extremely rigid hierarchical social structure, an inert and over-centralised bureaucracy, 30,000 schools, a quarter of a million teachers and seven million pupils spread throughout 50,000 villages, any change in education is extremely difficult to implement, let alone one that is moving in a completely different direction from established practices. Any attempt at developing learning arrangements to meet particular local needs is moving against the established dogma. Education in Thailand is still basically conceived as a continuum, with the main justification for the curriculum at one level of education being that it prepares students for the next level (which only a small proportion reach). It is seen as a way of promoting national unity, and equality of opportunity even though social factors and the distribution of resources ensure that children in poorer areas receive a very poor version of the 'same national scheme for education' that their more fortunate urban brethren receive. It is seen as a way of distributing the high positions in society, with parents being far more concerned with the certificates their children earn than the utility of what they learn. Finally it is seen as a way of maintaining discipline, and the hierarchical structure of society, with everything the student learns coming from the teacher, and everything the teacher teaches coming from national level instructions.

7. For many years now leading educators in Thailand have been aware of the fact that despite universal and compulsory basic elementary education, and significant enrolments at higher levels, formal schooling has benefitted those in the urban modern sector of society far more than those in the rural areas, and has probably in total had a negative effect on rural development. Seventeen years ago a special plan was introduced to develop education in up-country regions; fourteen years ago a new curriculum introduced which had as one of its objectives "to help children learn to cope with their environment", eleven years ago all urban elementary schools were transferred to municipal authorities, eight years ago virtually all rural elementary schools were transferred from the Ministry of Education to local authorities (which

in reality turned out to be a transfer to the Ministry of the Interior), and more recently regional Teacher Training Colleges have been established in all parts of the country, with one of their functions supposedly to help in the development of education in their regions.

8. Despite all these sincere efforts the Thai schools system still has a teacher centred, academic, modern urban sector oriented curriculum which tends to alienate the mass of the population from their environment. Still about 60 per cent of upper secondary (grades 11 & 12) school places are in the Bangkok region. Still government devotes between thirty and one hundred and sixty times more resources to the education of an urban middle class child than it does on the education of a remote rural child, and still only six per cent of university graduates come from farm families.

9. The formal school system continues to carry a lot of unproductive hidden messages(1); e.g. that the only way for individual progress is to migrate out of the local community; that physical labour is of low importance (only academic achievements are rewarded in examinations); that interest and involvement in the problems of the local community has no importance (again only achievements in irrelevant academic subjects are rewarded); that facts are more important than understanding; and that what the teacher says (i.e. the student's hierarchical superior) is always right.

10. Over the past four or five years several movements for reforming the school system so that it is more responsive to local needs have been mounted, all have produced relevant and interesting proposals most of which have remained on paper. After the revolution in October 1973 the pressures for reform of formal school education have intensified, and a new process involving people from all walks of life - educators, professionals, intellectuals, farmers, workers, businessmen etc.- has been started, but even with this wide involvement there is little more chance that their proposals will actually be implemented than those of the previous groups.

11. It seems to us that this inability to implement locally relevant educational reforms on a large scale is caused by seven major factors:

(i) Education is seen by the majority of teachers, administrators and parents as an end in itself not as a means of gaining useful knowledge, skills, attitudes and ideas.

---

(1) For a fuller description of the failures of the formal school system see Nicholas Bennett, The crisis in formal education in Thailand, Social Science Review, Bangkok, Thailand, September 1973.

(ii) It is felt that equality of educational opportunity involves sameness, i.e. there can only be equality if people all over the country study exactly the same things in the same way.

(iii) Many educators feel that the quality of education (by this they mean academic 'standards') must be consolidated and improved.

(iv) They also feel that only 'qualified' (i.e. people with the right certificates) people should be allowed to teach, however irrelevant the training leading to the qualification.

(v) Because of the irrelevance of the curriculum, parents either do not understand what schooling is for (80 per cent of those in rural areas) or see it solely as a step to continuing education and the eventual security of permanent salaried employment.

(vi) Despite an acceptance of the idea of decentralisation, in fact, because of a hierarchical social structure, those in the centre have little confidence in teachers and administrators at the local level, and thus control their behaviour with many petty regulations. The local teacher or administrator has little if any, freedom to experiment on his own initiative.

(vii) Again because of hierarchical social factors the budget allocation process is based on discussion and compromise, and not on the basis of any standard costing norms. This ensures that those schools, or regions that are already rich (and powerful) tend to get greater increases in budgets than those who are poor and deprived. This is because their social bargaining position is stronger.(1)

12. We consider all these factors to be incredibly important for we are convinced that an educational system cannot be much in advance of the values of society. Thus only if the values of parents, administrators and teachers can be changed will it be possible for many of the important proposals for creating a locally relevant educational system presently being drawn up, ever to be implemented.

---

(1) See for example:
Nicholas Bennett et al, The problems of financing the Thai education system, IIEP, Paris, 1974.

13. Because of the centralised and divided (each agency guards its authority over a particular field of activity, and there are tacit 'non-aggression pacts' between agencies) system of educational planning, financing (insignificant resources for education come from the local authorities or communities), budgeting, administration, curriculum development and textbook production, and pupil evaluation; and the huge size of formal system, it is impossible gradually to change the formal system and in so doing gradually to change the attitudes of people towards education. The situation of adult and non-formal education is quite different however, since there are fewer preconceived attitudes, the activities are much more directed towards people who are motivated to learn, rather than people who are forced to participate (the law, and parents force children to go to school) and thus the non-formal programmes will only get an audience if they can be seen to be relevant and useful. Most important of all however is the fact all adult and non-formal educational activities are taking place on a relatively small scale, and thus there is not the same bureaucratic inertia as exists with the formal system.

14. Thus for some time now in Thailand (and particularly over the last five years) people have seen adult and non-formal education not only as a way of helping people gain much needed knowledge, attitudes and ideas, but also as a way of testing new ideas, changing public attitudes of education and blazing a trial for the formal school to follow. Thus it is in the field of adult and non-formal education where the most promising actual initiatives (as opposed to paper plans) designed to help people either change themselves or their environment so that they can cope with and live in harmony with their particular surroundings, have taken place.

15. We are certainly, however, not claiming that non-formal programmes have solved all the local learning requirements, nor that particularly large numbers of people are being catered for. All that is claimed is that several locally relevant learning programmes are being developed, and implemented, thus demostrating to teachers, administrators and parents the validity of a new philosophy and approach to education.

II. PHILOSOPHY OF ADULT EDUCATION

16. Though various adult and non-formal adult education programmes have been taking place in Thailand over the last half century, up to quite recently most of these remained second class copies of the full time formal school system. However, more recently disatisfaction with many of the

automatically accepted assumptions of western style economic and educational development has grown, and the need to develop a realistic and human centered (as opposed to materialistic centred) philosophy of adult education has become apparent.

17. The philosophy(1) is based on the assumption that happiness and satisfaction is the goal of any individual, and this happiness can be defined as the extent to which man and his environment are in harmony: complete happiness can be achieved when there is no conflict between man and his environment physically or mentally. To take a simple example, a man who has to wear a heavy suit in a very hot climate is not likely to be completely happy no matter how proud he might be of his suit. On the other hand, if he has to attend a formal function, the same man would probably still be unhappy if he wears only his shorts no matter how cool and comfortable he is. A poor man who has not enough to eat is probably just as unhappy as a rich man who has plenty to eat but who is guilt-ridden or suffering from stomach-ache. Man will continue to strive until he reaches that equilibrium which can be found either by changing his environment or making adjustment within himself or both.

18. Since educational and development activities are designed to serve man, they therefore must aim ultimately to increase the happiness and the satisfaction level of the man himself; that is to assist him in his search for the tools that will enable him to create his own harmony.

19. In the Thai non-formal education programme, a process known as 'Khit Phen' has been identified as the vehicle to harmony. Some people translate the word 'Khit Phen' as critical thinking, others as rational thinking, still others as problem solving. It is, in fact, the combination of all these processes, and more. A man who has mastered the process of 'Khit Phen' will be able to approach problems in his daily life systematically. He shall be able to gather the widest range of information on alternative courses of action, and he will be able to weigh the merits of each alternative, based on his own values, his own capabilities, his personal situation, his relationship to the larger society, and the degree of feasibility of each solution.

---

(1) See Kowit Vorapipatana, The Khit Phen Man, Ministry of Education, Bangkok, 1974.

20. If, due to outside circumstances or lack of certain necessary knowledge or skills, the solution of his choice cannot be implemented right away, a 'Khit Phen' man will not become frustrated. Instead, he will adopt a lesser solution while preparing ways to make the solution of his choice possible. These can range from acquiring certain specific skills or knowledge to creating necessary conditions in the environment.

21. In other words, this philosophy encourages people to change, but not to destroy themselves physically and mentally in doing so.

22. Suppose one is imprisoned for a certain period of time, after having explored and tried all the possible ways of getting out and failed, a 'Khit Phen' man will try to live as happily as he possibly can in that situation until an opportunity to get out arises again.

23. For the Thai people, particularly the Buddhists, this means to accept that life is suffering and to live as happily as one can by attempting to minimize suffering. The first step that an educational programme can take to assist man in alleviating suffering is to help him master the process of 'Khit Phen'.

24. Though theoretically there are many ways in which education can lead to the development of the Khit Phen man, as most adults cannot be full-time students but are firstly farmers, artisans and housewives facing immediate problems in their day-to-day lives, the most promising way seems to be to focus educational action on the immediate problems faced by learners themselves.

25. The various new adult education programmes concentrate on creating situations and raising issues relevant to the villagers' environment, but which also encourage them to discuss amongst themselves and examine various possible alternative solutions to their problems. Through sharing their own experiences in class, and in other semi-formal activities, they find solutions to their own problems, and gradually master the process of Khit Phen.

26. In the remainder of this paper we will discuss three programmes that have recently been started, and have been designed in response to the villages' own needs, and three other programmes which are presently in the planning stage but are designed to further these initiatives. It should be noted that in comparison with the formal school system all these new

initiatives are relatively small, but their justification lies not so much with the number of participants actually involved (which is of course important) but with the impact their implementation is having and will have on the formal system.

III. THREE NEW COMMUNITY-CENTRED PROGRAMMES

A. Functional Literacy Programme

Background

27. Traditionally most men in Thailand learned to become literate from the Buddhist temple, but gradually over the last century the formal school has taken over this role. However the formal school has not been very effective in imparting literacy, with about one third of the children who complete compulsory education (60 per cent of those in more remote rural areas) not being functionally literate three years after graduation. Thus over the last forty years in Thailand there have been several adult literacy campaigns none of which have been very successful.

28. In 1968 Thailand experimented with a Unesco type functional literacy programme (developed as a result of the 1965 Ministers of Education Conference on the Iradication of literacy held in Tehran).

29. This method involved a work-oriented literacy approach, and was based on the assumption that people would be motivated to come to study if literacy could be related to work experience. However in the Thai situation, it was soon realised that the teacher did not really know more than the farmer about farming, nor more than the artisan about his particular skill. Thus quite rapidly the teacher slipped back into doing what he knew best - i.e. teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, and the motivation (and thus the attendance) of participants rapidly diminished. It was also realised that students presented with a full text were often put off by the amount they had to learn before completing the course.

The Scheme

30. In 1970 therefore, a group of Thai adult educators became convinced that this approach would have to be changed partly for the above reason and partly because it was felt that un-schooled people (particularly in rural areas) faced important problems that were causing suffering in many fields other than their work. A new method was therefore developed focussing on diverse problems related to the lives of different groups of people, and this method was presented to a conference organised by

World Education Inc. who later agreed to support this initiative. Even before detailed planning begun it was decided that this new approach would have to take account of at least the following prerequisites:

(1) It should develop Khit Phen abilities.

(2) It should be designed in such a way as to motivate students not only to join the classes, but also to continue studying until completion.

(3) It should provide the learner with resources for acquiring information and ideas which are relevant to his environment, and which can be seen as helping him solve the problems facing him in his day-to-day life.
Prescriptive decisions should not be provided.

(4) It should be designed so that flexibility, both in content and in organisation and methods of teaching, is possible.

31. Taking account of these prerequisites certain decisions were made prior to designing the curriculum. Firstly it was decided that from the very first day of the course the participant should have a complete text, and discuss a specific problem relating to this life and in so doing learn a few key words. In other words the course would not insist that participants actually read the lessons from the beginning (as this would restrict content) but would assume that for the first classes the pupil would memorise the text and learn a few key words. Secondly, it was decided that no ordinary text books would be prepared, but instead, each participant would be given an empty loose leaf folder, and for each lesson he attended he would be given a card with a picture on one side, and a text on the other. In this way the participants could actually see their knowledge growing as their file filled out, and in addition by substituting cards from region to region environmental relevance could be maintained in any part of the country. Thirdly it was decided that the teacher should concentrate on the issues of each lesson rather than on the academic disciplines involved. Finally it was decided that in order to motivate adults to joint the course, certificates equivalent to those issued to Grade IV pupils should be given to those who completed.

32. Most important of all was the point that the content of the course must be completely relevant to the environment and problems of the participant from the very first day. It was decided therefore to test this new system in two social-cultural-economically homogeneous provinces in the North of Thailand.

33. The first step in the construction of the new curriculum was the mounting of a K.A.P (Knowledge attitudes and practices) survey in villages in the two provinces. Researchers from Bangkok went to the villages with questionnaires and interviewed villagers to try to discover what problems existed, and what conditions were causing these problems. After this K.A.P. survey was completed, local professionals (agriculturalists, health workers etc.,) were also asked to identify the problems being faced by villagers in these areas, and from these two sources 73 priority problems were identified. Local educational officials and professionals then discussed these 73 problems in order to identify what action could be expected from the participants through reading the texts and discussing in a Khit Phen way, and what information they would need in order to take this action effectively. Great attention was paid to developing concepts which were realistic in the particular environment (e.g. there was no point in suggesting that a villager should go to a pediatrician whenever his child is sick). Local adult education supervisors, and other adult education officials then drew up a curriculum around these 73 concepts, at the same time trying indirectly to ensure that in terms of literacy and numerical skills the participants would reach a Grade IV level. Together a course involving about 200 hours of study (which would normally take six months to complete) involving three $2\frac{1}{2}$ hour classes per week was developed on 220 cards.

34. Teachers for the courses were then trained (they could be either school teachers, or anyone else in the village with at least a Grade VII education). This training was designed to introduce a new method of teaching (at least new in Thailand), where the teacher's function was less that of lecturing to the class, and more directed towards creating discussion amongst the participants on the particular topic. In other words the teacher was seen far more as a facilitator than a teacher. This training took place in the provinces from which the teachers came.

35. These teachers themselves then had the responsibility of going back to their villages, finding a place to hold the course (in the school, a temple or a private house) and mobilising the villagers to participate in the course.

36. There was a very careful evaluation after the first year, both of literacy and numeracy achievements (the results compared favourably with more conventional methods) and in terms of attitude change (many positive changes in attitudes were noted). Some cards were then revised, the

academic content slightly increased so that participants would feel equipped to continue their learning in other adult programmes, and the coverage expanded.

37. At first the same texts were used in other parts of the country but it was soon realised that for certain regions results were not satisfactory as there was insufficient environmental relevance, and thus regional and provincial education officials were given the freedom to substitute any of the cards they felt necessary with material more relevant to the conditions and problems in their region. Though in revising parts of the texts for different regions, except in one region where both the language and the culture were more Malay than Thai, no detailed K.A.P. studies were carried out, there was considerable dialogue between educational officials, villagers, teachers using the original cards (who felt some change was needed), and developmental personnel. The following examples will give some indication of the flexibility of the programme:

(1) In Songkhla in the South of Thailand, supervisors changed a significant proportion of the cards.

(2) Further south in Yala, in areas where Malay was the first language, virtually a completely different set of cards and method of teaching were used. Not only did the teacher start off by introducing the subject in Malay, but the first cards were also entirely in Malay (except for a few key words) though using the Thai script. As the programme progressed, more and more Thai was gradually introduced.

(3) In a poor area in the North of Thailand (Nan) the original cards were used, but instead of participants formally attending class the teacher would go round to the villagers homes teaching 3-20 adults at a time. Some of the teachers or facilitators are employed on a full-time basis.

(4) A six months residential course for Hill tribe youth involving practical agricultural work in addition to the course was held in the North of the country.

38. In addition to these variations many others are taking place, with different types of people being selected as teachers, the courses occuring in different places, parents sometimes being allowed to bring their small children to class with them, and adjustments being made in meeting times to fit in with the farm labour requirements of participants.

39. All these variations were possible because it was decided not to have any final examination (though the teacher was expected to evaluate progress after every three classes). Certificates equivalent to Grade IV were given to all participants who had attended at least 70 per cent of the classes.

Administration and Financing

40. The original idea for this programme came from officials in the Ministry of Education in Bangkok (with some financial and expert assistance from World Education Incorporated). However, because it is one of the few programmes where creative assistance is required from local educational officials it has succeeded in attracting a great deal of support of some of the best educators in the regions and provinces. During the first couple of years of the project it was mainly promoted by central officials, but now the initiative has moved to the provinces, local officials go round the villages to identify both places where there is a need for functional literacy courses, and to select someone to teach the course. They then send their requests to Bangkok, and central officials negotiate for the necessary funds from the Budget Bureau. Depending on the funds received, Adult Education Division either approves or rejects the provincial proposal, this selection being based on an evaluation of factors such as the degree of development of the province, the likely degree of support in adjusting the curriculum to meet local needs and in supervising on a regular basis the operations, and the success or otherwise of the programme in that province in previous years. Funds for a given number of courses are allocated to each province each year, and local officials decide exactly where there courses should take place. The Division of Adult Education then trains the teachers at a time convenient to the province, and from then on the operation is the function of the provincial educational officials. Overall evaluation still remains the responsibility of the Division of Adult Education.

41. Participants pay no fee, but the teachers are paid Baht 20 (U.S.$1 = Baht 20) an hour. At present the programme is financed entirely by the central government (except in a few cases where private charitable organisations have mounted programmes) though it is hoped in future that provincial authorities will find it possible to participate in the financing. As existing facilities are always used no capital financing is required. The average cost of a course for 25 students is Baht 7,019 broken down as follows:

	Baht
Teacher Remmeration	4,000
Classroom materials	600
Supervision remuneration and travel	412
Teacher Training	800
Printing Teacher Handbook and cards	1,207
Total	7,019

Thus the cost per pupil is about Baht 281, which is considerably less than the Baht 2,000 it costs to reach roughly the same level of academic achievement (without the functional knowledge) through a formal primary school.

CONCLUSIONS

42. This functional literacy programme has provided the planners of the formal system with a considerable amount of important information, for example:

- That participant (or pupil) motivation can be intensified if from the first lesson the participant is provided with information that can be immediately related to his environment. Literacy can be taught if, even on the first day, the pupil is presented with complete and relevant texts.
- It is possible to have equivalent academic achievement in different regions even though the content of courses in different parts the country is different.
- It is possible to teach in a non-teacher centred way involving the participants in dialogue amongst themselves with the teacher as a facilitator, intervening only when requested.
- It is not necessary to have 'qualified' teachers to teach, many other potential teachers exist in the villages.
- It is not necessary to burden programmes with a host of bureaucratic rules and regulations. Local educational officials, if given the chance will run programmes in a creative and imaginative way.

43. Most important of all, however, it has been proved that not only is it possible to design an effective educational programme around local problems and conditions, but that such a design enables the programme to be completed

in a shorter time, at much lower costs, and with better results (both academic and in terms of attitude change) than other more formal 'national' methods.

B. Newspaper Reading Centres

Background

44. It is well known that literacy training in itself has little purpose for unless new literates have both the motivation to read, and something to read they will rapidly relapse into illiteracy.

45. Thus since literacy courses were taking place it was felt that some form of reading centre should be established. At first it was decided to construct a small reading centre or village library and to stock this with various fiction and relevant non-fiction works. However, it was found that because there was no incentive for the farmers to go to these centres on a regular basis, and because there was no stock of useful materials for new literates, these first centres were not well patronised.

46. It was therefore decided to change the approach as follows:

(i) Only to support with reading materials villages that had demonstrated their interest, by forming a reading centre committee which raised funds from villagers and persuaded them to contribute labour to construct the centre itself.

(ii) To provide for each centre so constructed three daily newspapers (and other materials as well) so that villagers would have an incentive to go to the centre on a regular basis.

The Project

47. Any village wanting to be provided with free daily newspapers and other reading materials must form a Village Newspaper Reading Centre Committee usually with five or six members with a teacher or other more 'educated' villager as secretary. This committee has five major functions. First, it must inform the provincial officials of their desire to have a centre, and check on the availability of budget in that particular year for purchasing newspapers. The committee will then be provided with a handbook with information on organising and setting up a centre (i.e. size, criteria for site selection facilities to be provided, functions of committee etc.). Second, the committee calls a meeting of villagers, explains the idea of the centre, discusses the possible sites for the centre, and solicits support from the villagers for its construction

in terms of money, materials and labour. Third, the committee arranges for the daily for the daily collection of newspapers and other reading materials from the nearest distribution point (usually the district town). Fourth, the committee arranges to have the centre opened and closed at a certain time each day. Fifth, the committee is supposed to keep records of the number of people using the centre.

48. Each centre usually consists of a small (e.g. 6 metres by 6 metres) open walled pavillion, with a table, benches, newspaper racks, a notice board, and a lockable cupboard. It is normally constructed near the centre of the community (e.g. by the temple or the village chief's house).

49. At the present time the average reading centre will have the following materials:

- 1 National and 1 local newspaper;
- the fortnightly adult education wall newspaper (produced by the Adult Education Division), and the five or six readers currently available for new literates;
- a newspaper for new literates produced by a private foundation;
- various other materials produced by other agencies, e.g. the planned parenthood association, the democracy propagation committees, and some development ministries;
- donations of books solicited by the reading centre committee itself.

50. On average between 15 and 40 adults use the centre each day (depending on the season) as well as a large number of school children. The greater the participation in the construction of the centre the greater its usage.

Administration and Financing

51. The project originated from the Adult Education Division, and was first run on a pilot basis in the same two provinces as the functional literacy programme. Now however the administration is entirely in the hands of the local committees and provincial officials, though with the bulk of the recurrent financing still coming from the central government.

52. The division of Adult Education has only four major functions in this project. First, it has to negotiate for budget and allocate the limited budgets available to the various provinces. Secondly, it has to prepare the handbook, and provide any other training needed. Third, it

has to provide the provinces with a sufficient number of wall newspapers, and other reading materials for new literates. Fourthly, it is responsible for evaluating the project.

53. Local educational officials have a much more central rôle to play. They, for example, have to help in mobilizing villages to construct and run the centre, and in advising the centre committee. They have to decide which newspapers will be bought and contract a distributor. If too many villages want centres they have to decide which ones will be supported. And finally they have to supervise the centres from time to time.

54. The only direct government financial contribution is 3 bahts per centre per day. This used to be enough for three daily newspapers but is now only sufficient for two. Thus the yearly operation cost is only about the same as keeping two or three pupils in elementary schools.

55. Every year very many more requests for centres are received from villages than the Budget Bureau is prepared to finance. (This is because many officials still only see education in terms of pupils, teachers and schools). Much to the surprise of many central government officials, several provinces are now raising their own funds to expand the programme faster than central financing will allow.

CONCLUSIONS

56. The basic conclusion that can be drawn from this project is that with a minimum of support from government villagers are prepared to construct and run a centre which keeps them in touch with the outside world, and also provides them with interesting and useful things to read.

57. For a very small government investment a reading habit can be created which justifies the investment in functional literacy, as well as the relatively much larger investment in formal elementary schooling. With those small centres, both children and adults become aware that there is some purpose in learning to read, and thus any literacy training becomes more effective.

C. Functionalising School Equivalency Adult Education Curricula Background

Background

58. The Adult Education Division runs part-time evening courses for school drop-outs and other young adults. These courses require three hours study a night for five days a week. Levels 1 and 2 are equivalent to the first four years of elementary schooling and has almost entirely been replaced by the functional literacy programme. Level 3 requires 18 months of part-time study

(compared with 3 years in formal school) and graduates are entitled to a Grade VII certificate. Level 4 (18 months part-time study) entitles graduates to a Grade X certificate, and level 5 (2 years part-time study) earns a grade XII certificate.

59. After the success of the Functional Literacy programme it was decided to functionalise the other levels of the school equivalency course, level by level. Though no new curriculum has yet been used the process of functionalising the curriculum of level 3 is nearly complete, we feel therefore that a short description of this process might provide other participants with some useful information.

The Process

60. A committee of the more innovative and radical educators was formed in the Ministry of Education, and given the authority to draw up a new functional problem oriented curriculum for level 3. This committee decided that most of the work should not be done by itself, but instead should be done by villagers, housewives, local educational officials, and development experts. Thus one progressive farmer was selected from each region (there are twelve regions) and one village housewife from every two regions. In addition one leading educator and one developmental expert (agriculturalist, economist, doctors, etc.) were chosen from each region.

61. These forty or so people were brought to Bangkok (it may have been a mistake to bring them to the capital but it did provide them with an incentive to participate actively). After a few introductory statements explaining what was expected of them, they were divided into three groups - group I, farmers and housewives, group II, educators; and group III development experts. The groups were organised in this way at first in order to give the villagers a chance to express their own views without being intimidated by their hierarchical superiors. During the first group meetings participants were expected to practice identifying the most important conditions and problems in rural areas according to their experience. The participants were then sent back to their provinces and villages, and were asked to meditate further on these conditions and problems. During the first part of this period they were expected to study, and analyse carefully which problems were most relevant to the conditions in their particular region, to list these problems in order of priority; and to send their conclusions to Bangkok. During the second part of this period they were expected to study the problems in depth in order to identify the causes, and if possible also to suggest some possible solutions.

62. The division then drew up a master list of problems and conditions classified by field, and listed in order of priority under the headings of National, Regional, Provincial and Local. All participants were then again brought to Bangkok, divided into groups (this time since the villagers had developed a degree of self-confidence, in multi-disciplinary groups), and instructed to discuss in detail this listing of problems, commenting on their priority and geographical relevance and also adding causes and possible solutions to the list. Then a master list including conditions, problems, causes and solutions was drawn up in a plenary session, analysed by priority, by field, and by geographical incidence.

63. This list was then handed over to researchers who prepared a questionnaire to check its validity in the various parts of the country. In each region this questionnaire was administered in villages, sub-district towns and district towns, and the master list altered in terms of geographical incidence of the problems. This is the stage that has now been reached.

64. It will be followed by the development expert group providing more detailed technical information on the issues that will have to be put across if the problems are to be solved, and then by the educators group who will have to draw up a curriculum around the concepts, including as much as possible of the academic Grade V-VII curriculum as is possible at the same time.

65. Finally modular programmed texts with regional variations (and possibly also scope for provincial or local variations as well) will be prepared which will be used both in class, and for people living in more remote areas by correspondence with radio support, the radio programmes produced both nationally and regionally depending on the topic.

CONCLUSIONS

66. This process has demonstrated that in the Thai situation it is possible to involve ordinary farmers, housewives and other non-educators in the curriculum development process. It also drew attention to the very important fact that villagers perceive as priority problems many points which are not considered important by educators and development personnel, and vice-versa. In other words educators were made aware that villagers' conception of reality was different from their own, and that in order to get the support of the villagers it is necessary to take account of what they see as important.

67. It is likely that the results of this process of identifying conditions, problems, causes and solutions will have far greater application than originally anticipated. Already these results are being considered in the

tentative design for functionalising the Level 4 (Grades VIII-X) curriculum, and revising adult education skill training curriculum, and in addition many of leading educators involved in formal school curriculum reform have shown a great interest in the preliminary materials developed.

68. Most important of all however this process will ensure that the large and growing number of young adults who are motivated to attend school equivalency courses because of the certificates offered, will at the same time learn things that are useful in helping them cope with their environment and their day-to-day lives.

IV. SOME FURTHER PLANS

69. Whereas the three programmes designed in section III above have actually happened or are happening, those included in this section are planned to occur in the next few years, supporting and leading out of the above initiatives.

A. Developing a skill training system to meet the skill needs of villagers

Background

70. There are many adult education skill training programmes currently in existence in Thailand, some run from fixed sites, and others from semi-mobile units, some requiring full-time participation, and others only evening attendance. Practically all however have been designed centrally without a prior analyses of the learning requirements of the participants, all are skill specific (i.e. the participants study just one skill), and all are relatively inflexible, in curriculum (most involve a 300 hour course), in times of operation, and in location (the mobile units because of their large scale of operation can never really move to the villages).

71. Leading out of the Khit phen philosophy, and the experience gained in functionalising school equivalency courses adult educators are convinced that a complete revision of skill training programmes is essential if these are to produce effective returns.

The Plan

72. This transformation involves the following major elements:

(i) A study of the priority skill requirements of different population groups in different parts of the country.

(ii) The development of a large number of skill training curriculum modules designed to meet the priority needs of these different groups, and involving different lengths of study. These modules will not be skill specific but will concentrate on providing the skill packages that particular villagers might need to know. For example farmers in an area where a new dam has been built might need to learn a little about how to construct and look after dykes and channels, a little about simple mechanics (so they can maintain and repair their water pumps) and a little about carpentry (so that they can make or repair the paddles used with the water pumps). In addition they would need to know how to select the right equipment. Thus several multi-skill "irrigation modules" of differing lengths and complexity might by prepared solely designed to provide farmers with the skills they need, and not to meet any outside evaluation of what needs to be known in theory and practice under the heading of 'carpentry' or 'mechanics' etc.

(iii) Existing mobile vocational training units will be regrouped (at the outset) around Regional Adult Education Centres (see C below) which will act as a maintenance centre and a base for the staff.

(iv) Either in response to requests from villagers, or from life-long education centres (see B below), or in response to some disaster or special problem, small teams of two or three relevant trainers and the necessary simple materials and equipment will be sent to the villages to carry out specific training, (say over two or three weeks) and will then return to their base. For example one village might request that a two-week course on dressmaking be held, or a life-long centre might request a three-week half-day course on irrigation, or a team on house building might be sent to a village badly hit by floods.

73. The essence of this plan is therefore that a skill training capacity be developed which can respond to direct or indirect requests of villagers, instead of the present system whereby participants can either accept or reject the few relatively inflexible skill specific programmes that are offered. Obviously as more and more skill package modules are developed the programme will become more successful, and as demands increase it is

anticipated that the programme will be transferred from the Regional Adult Education Centres (which are basically an extension of the central government) to the provinces. Even at the outset the provincial officials will have an important role to play in soliciting and evaluating village requests, in informing the centre of the need for rescue operations, and in assisting in the evaluation of the success of the programme.

B. Establishment of life-long education centres

Background

74. The high degree of participation in the construction organisation, and utilisation of the village newspaper reading centres has demonstrated that a potential for village centred and organised learning activities exists. It is also true that the reading centre itself is not sufficient for maintaining Khit Phen abilities in villagers, for reading, unaccompanied by other activities is a limited and uni-directional form of communication. It is therefore felt that if the concept of the reading centre should be expanded to provide a framework for other continuing educational activities of different types, and should provide a sense of permanence for all the various existing fixed period, one-shot programmes (from six-months courses to a one-day visit of an extension worker) this could help turn the idea of life-long continuing education into a reality, maintain Khit Phen abilities gained in these programmes, and keep the villager in touch with the changes in technology and in his environment.

75. It has thus been decided to establish in association with the Regional Adult Education Centres, eighty pilot life-long education centres, fifty-six of which will be in rural areas.

The Plan

76. Various different formats for rural life-long centres will be tested. Some will be created around the school, some around the village temple, some in community centres, and some will be developed from the newspaper reading centre. Each life-long centre should have at least a reading room, a meeting room where different village interest groups can meet or in which more formal adult education classes can be held, and a radio listening or T.V. viewing room (relating to an educational mass media project being planned concurrently). As with the reading centres, construction of any facilities needed will be the responsibility of the villagers, as will be the operation of the centre.

77. It is planned that eventually these life-long education centres might have the following functions:

(i) To serve as resource centres for the surrounding area through the provision of library and audio-visual services (such as films, slides, audio tapes for recorded educational courses, radios, etc.), the holding of exhibitions, and the display of follow-up materials for various educational and developmental programmes;

(ii) To organise adult education classes or develop individualized, instruction programmes in functional literacy and/or skill training;

(iii) To provide learning exchange services for individuals by putting them in contact either with teachers or with fellow learners with similar interests. Records of learners, teachers and their interests will be kept and displayed by the centres;

(iv) To provide counselling services in out-of-school education;

(v) To act as centres from which radio listening groups can be organised;

(vi) To act as centres from which interest groups can be organised (a group of 15 or more people with the common educational goal that the centre would aid by locating teachers, developing curriculum, etc.);

(vii) To serve as recreation and cultural centres;

(viii) To act as a community centre for various activities (festivals, weddings, etc.), and as a co-ordinating centre for community development projects;

(ix) To act as a centre from which other agencies can run seminars, training, demonstration and follow-up activities.

78. Each centre will have three levels of activity; activities organised by the centre itself, activities organised at the centre by other agencies using the centre's facilities, and agencies that might only supply materials and other assistance to the centres.

79. The organisers of the centres will however be given training, newspaper, books and other materials by the Regional Adult Education Centres, and will also be given priority in their requests for certain courses and other programmes. In addition, central and provincial officials will have

a rôle to play in mobilising villagers to set up the centre, providing technical and other assistance when requested, carrying out periodic supervision, and finally evaluating the relative success of the different approaches.

C. Establishment of Regional Adult Education Centre

Background

80. With the above new initiatives taking place or planned and with the need to research more deeply into the problems being faced by communities in different parts of the country, in order to develop more and more relevant curricula and materials it has been decided to establish four regional research, development and operational centres, one in each of the homogeneous geographical regions of the country.

81. In many respects the establishment of these centres can be seen as an institutionalisation of the attempts over the past five years at developing locally relevant and functional adult education programmes and activities, by providing in up-country areas a significant research, curriculum development, materials production and technical assistance presence.

The Plan

82. In the first phase four centres will be established, one in the central region, one in the North, one in the Northeast, and one in the South. It is anticipated that in the longer run there will be one centre in each of the twelve regions and eventually one in each of the seventy-one provinces. These first four centres will be established at the same time in the same place as Educational Technology Centres (which will be responsible for educational broadcasting and other mass media) and thus will make considerable use of radio and other media.

83. Each centre will have a staff of over one hundred, including agriculturalists, health workers, community development personnel, adult educators, curriculum specialists, skill training teachers, researchers, etc. The centres will also be provided with adequate workshop, classroom, library, and dormitory facilities to carry out the following functions:

(i) To promote and to conduct research on educational needs (both individual and community) and the socio-economic conditions of the population in the areas under its responsibility;

(ii) To develop, test, revise curriculum, texts, supplementary readers and other teaching materials for adult education;

(iii) To plan and to organize training programmes for administrators, supervisors, instructors and other personnel in adult education;

(iv) To evaluate the value of existing programmes and to experiment with new approaches in adult education;

(v) To assist provincial educational officers in operating existing adult education programmes by providing them with up-to-date information for decision making and by serving as technical advisors;

(vi) To develop adult education so that it becomes more oriented towards the improvement of quality of life of the rural population by operating demonstration classes, and providing rescue teams to solve urgent education problems that cannot be dealt with by regular programmes.

(vii) To serve as a co-ordinator on important technical aspects of adult education, both for programmes under the Ministry of Education and for those under other agencies.

84. The centres will not have operational responsibilities for ongoing adult education programmes (except insofar as it is necessary for the centre to mount these programmes as an essential part of its research and curriculum development activities) as it is strongly felt that these should remain with provincial educators. However, the centres will be responsible for the operation of all new pilot programmes, up to such a time as their pilot phase is completed and they are approved for full-scale implementation. They will therefore take charge of the life-long education centres, the new system of vocational education, and the new correspondence programme for functional level 3 courses mentioned earlier.

85. Despite their lack of comprehensive operational responsibilities, they will play a crucial rôle in supporting the various programmes outlined in the paper. They will for example prepare new curriculum variants for functional education programmes, prepare skill training curriculum modules, train the teachers for most adult or non-formal programmes, produce regional wall newspapers, and at least a dozen relevant books for new literates per year (for life-long and newspaper reading centres), run seminars for supervisors, help produce radio programmes, films and other media productions to support the new initiatives and hold seminars and provide technical assistance for provincial supervisors and administrators. Finally the new vocational training programme will, to start off with, be run from the centres.

86. The IBRD seems willing to finance a large proportion of the capital costs of establishment (though the Thai Government is not yet convinced of the need to borrow money externally) along with a closely associated educational mass media project. All recurrent costs will be met by the central government (apart from small amounts of finance generated by the project).

V. CONCLUSIONS

87. On first analyses it might seem that a country such as Thailand would be one of the last countries in the world to successfully involve villagers and provincial educators in the design, curriculum development, construction and operation of rural centred educational programmes.

88. The society has an extreme hierarchical structure, with traditionally considerable respect being shown to social superiors. Real power is concentrated in the hands of a few soldiers, academics and bureaucrats (though student, worker, peasant and other power groups are gradually having an increasing effect on government) who in the past have demonstrated neither a great interest, nor a clear understanding of the problems in rural areas. The decision-making process has also tended to act against the rural areas, allocating more resources to those who are already quite rich and powerful.

89. Nor is there a tradition of people having a positive attitude to government and government officials, due partly to the fact that they have rarely been consulted in the planning of programmes that effect their lives (i.e. hierarchical structure), and partly due to the widescale corruption that exists.

90. In addition rural Thais do not really think that education is related to what happens in their community, and if they see it having any purpose it is as a way out of the community through more and more certificates into salaried and secure employment. Traditionally also the Thai lacks a social conscience and community spirit, being only really concerned with his family (extended) and closest friends.

91. Thus at the beginning of these new initiatives aimed at adjusting adult and non-formal schemes to the needs of villagers, partly as perceived by them, many outside observers were very sceptical, particularly since most earlier attempts (generally involving <u>giving</u> the village something and then moving on to other villages) had not met with great success.

92. However, despite the fact that Dr. Kowit and I (though to a much lesser extent) have been involved in the schemes described in this paper, we can say in all humility that the process that is underway in the adult education field is mobilising a considerable degree of interest and support, from villagers, from provincial officials, and from more conventional educators.

93. In our view there are four basic reasons for the relative success of these programmes:

(i) There has been a commitment on the part of the central government officials involved to rural development;

(ii) There has been a respect amongst the officials for many of the values of the villagers, i.e. the objective has not been to turn them into second class copies of western man; villagers have been treated as subjects of their own existence, not as objects to be manipulated by people who "know more";

(iii) The programmes have all started on a small scale, and have not been expanded faster than the availability of capable and motivated personnel to administer them;

(iv) A systematic approach has been followed with each step logically leading out of the previous step. First a functional literacy programme based on an outside study of village problems was started. This then drew attention to the need to encourage a regular reading habit which led to the mobilisation of villagers to construct newspaper reading centres. The success of the functional literacy programme also led to a desire to functionalise other programmes, this time with a more direct involvement of villagers. This curriculum development process itself drew attention to various weaknesses in other programmes particularly those dealing with skill development. Similarly the reading centre project demonstrated that there was a considerable potential in the rural areas for villagers to organise their own educational activities which thus led to the life-long education centre project. With all these non-national initiatives taking place in different parts of the country it then became apparent that some regional research, development and supporting presence should be established, which led to the Regional Adult Education Centre project. In this sytematic way, with each new step reinforcing and supporting past steps, an entirely new approach both to education and the planning of education is being developed.

94. More and more the initiative for non-formal and adult education is moving away from the centre towards the regions, provinces, and villages. It is not however a process that can be accomplished overnight, since each little success will make future successes more likely, and thus there is still considerable central control. Nevertheless in these programmes the people themselves are now more involved in determining what they will learn, where and when than ever before.

95. Unfortunately, however, no similar successes in local involvement in the planning and development of formal schooling, can be reported, though there are indications that there might shortly be a decentralisation and diversification of curriculum, and an elementary school system designed more to meet education system. If this could be done then the marriage between formal and non-formal education which began to break up a few years ago, could be recemented to the mutual benefit for all concerned.